OUR YOUNG FOLKS

Jack on the Desert

A Story for Boys

A LITTLE thrill of horror passed through Jack as he looked back over his shoulder at the great red setting sun. He realized the shortness of the desert twilight, and knew that very soon after old Sol had sunk from sight the curtains of night would fall blackly about him. And there would be no moon till late—about eleven o'clock, if Jack's memory served him rightly.

Early in the afternoon Jack had set out on an expedition across one corner of the desert, hoping to reach the Darnton Ranch before supper time. He had had full instructions from his cousin Dick at the Healy Ranch, and though he was damp with perspiration, and the day was extremely warm for the middle of May. "Land o' love! Wonder if I'm lost!" Jack exclaimed. His voice sounded strange on the silent desert. Then his mind reverted to the stories he had heard of the coyotes that roamed that part of the world at night, and of the depredations committed by them. Sometimes human beings had been attacked by coyotes mad from hunger, but usually their victims were young domestic animals and fowls.

At last the sun sank behind the edge of the land a brilliant short-lived twilight made the world look beautiful.

Jack was frozen to the spot, unable to move for a few seconds.

knew that if he walked as he should, and followed the right course, he would see the high windmill and long white ranch house of the Darnton Ranch about half-past six o'clock. The two ranches, the Healy and the Darnton, were about ten miles apart, a distance of no importance in that part of the world where neighbors fifteen miles apart often went visiting each other of evenings. And Jack had been living at his uncle's ranch—the Healy—for three months, and had once, in company with his cousin, Dick, gone over to the Darnton, on foot. The walk had been most enjoyable, the soft sand beneath their feet making progress easy. So Jack had decided to make the trip today alone, his Cousin Dick being unable to accompany him.

But he felt a little uneasy when, late in the afternoon, he failed to see the high windmill belonging to the Darnton Ranch. He should have come in sight of the place about five, having started from his own place at one o'clock.

"I must have got off the right track," Jack muttered, consulting his watch. "Half-past six!" He shivered, But Jack did not stop to admire, or to realize the beauty of the dusk. He bent every energy and went towards the east with all his strength. He feared to be without the sun. So long as that great luminary remained in the sky he knew the direction he should travel. Once it was out of sight, he might get entirely turned round as to the points of the compass. So, with the western glow still in the sky helping him, he went forward with new speed.

He must have walked considerably more than his ten miles before the sun had set, and after its last ray was lost from the sky he kept right on, having found the north star—or, at least, he thought he had the north star picked out from its fellows—to guide him aright. He was supposed to go directly East to reach the Darnton Ranch, and on a B-line it was just ten miles from the Healy Ranch. How he had missed the place, Jack could not understand, for up till sundown, he had kept the sun behind him—directly at his back. He had not remembered that the sun did not sink directly in the West at that time of year, but quite a bit north of west. In this way he had gone south of east.

After walking till exceedingly tired, Jack decided to sit down on the sand and rest a few minutes. He felt that another hundred yards without resting would be impossible. While sitting there, his arms limp beside him and his legs stretched out, fully relaxed, he heard a snort from behind him. It sounded like some animal, breathing hard against the sand, blowing its hot breath out in a hostile way. Jack was frozen to the spot, unable to move for a few seconds. Then he knew it could not be a prairie wolf. A coyote would come stealthily, not blowing out its breath in that fashion. Jack at last got courage to get to his knees and look behind him. He could make out by the dim starlight a huge dark form, a shapeless mass of moving shadow. Be it elephant, buffalo, horse or cow, no one could have said from its dim outline.

Jack knew there were no elephants and buffalo in that part of the world, but there were the last two named animals, and plenty of them, especially plenty of cattle. In case the strange creature should be a horse or a cow—and it must of necessity be one of them—there could be no danger resulting from a meeting with it there on the lonely desert. Jack got to his feet and whistled; then said, "Come, Bossy! Come, Bossy!" But no "Bossy" came. The animal lifted its head and again snorted. Jack was fully decided now. It was a horse, and a gentle one, no doubt, seeing that it did not run away when he showed himself and made himself heard. "Ho, fellow!" said Jack gently, rising and advancing cautiously towards the dark object whose outline became plainer as he drew nearer it. "Ho, fellow! Whoa, whoa, there, boy!" And he walked right up to the horse, for such it really proved to be, and as fine a fellow as one could wish to meet with on a lonely stretch of desolate land.

Jack soon made friends with the horse and decided to mount him and trust to his going home. There would be no possible way of guiding the bridleless horse.

After several strenuous efforts Jack managed to get astride the horse's back, the gentle animal not making the slightest objection. Indeed, he seemed glad to have a comrade to carry, and lifted his head and shook his mane in a friendly way.

"Now, old friend, go your own way." And Jack clucked and tapped the horse's sides with his shoe-heels, signalling him to start. Not being guided in any direction, the horse turned about and went ambling off across the sandy waste. Jack glanced up at the north star, and felt a bit afraid that the horse was taking him toward the arid lands to the south-east in the heart of the desert where no man lived. But he had made up his mind to let the horse have his head, and not to try to guide him in any way.

The horse proved a good traveller, though the evening was oppressively hot, and made rapid progress over the sand. Jack forgot to feel afraid, now that he had such a good, accommodating friend, and sat easily resting as he was carried along. After some twenty minutes a tall dark thing loomed up before him, and a little later a low, long object stretched out close to it. Ah, it was the windmill and the ranch house of the Darnton Ranch! And he had only been a mile away from it—a mile too far to the east! Then Jack realized what his mistake had been—he should have gone a little south of east, and he had gone due east. As there was a swell of ground running to the south of the ranch, he had travelled in such a way as to place this between himself and the ranch buildings, and had not been able to see them even though within seeing distance before the sun had set. It was only after gaining the top of the sandy ridge that the windmill and the ranch house came into view.

The horse rounded the corner of a barbed wire fence, seemingly familiar with the lay of things about the ranch. Then he brought up at the front gate and Jack's heart thrilled to see the yard flooded with light from the open door and windows. For a while he had feared he might not reach a friendly shelter that night.

"Hello, if it isn't Jack Hollingsworth, and—upon my word, if he isn't on old Andrew Jackson!" It was Mr. Darnton, master of the ranch. He had heard Jack's "What, ho, within!" and had gone out to the gate to see who was crying greetings to him. "Well, well," he went on, as Jack dismounted, "where on top this ball did you get old Andrew Jackson? One of the boys is out hunting for him now. He strayed out of the yard some time this afternoon and didn't show up for supper, so Hank's looking for him."

Jack soon told the story of his meeting with old Andrew Jackson, and the hospitable master of Darnton Ranch slapped his knee, crying, "Why, that old hoss knows more than his master does. He felt it in his bones that our young friend from the East was going to be in need of him, so he set out to meet you at the very spot where you gave up for lost. Well, he's a fine piece of flesh, is old Andrew Jackson. But—Mother,"—turning to Mrs. Darnton, a laughing, gracious lady—"do you think there's a bone and a crust left over from supper to feed this tramp?"

"Well, we'll look in the cupboard, Father," said Mrs. Darnton, giving Jack both her hands in welcome, "and unless it's in the state of old Mother Hubbard's cupboard, we'll doubtless find something besides a bone and a crust for our most welcome guest."

Ten minutes later, Jack, sitting between his hostess and her pretty daughter, and facing the master of the ranch, ate a hearty, though rather late supper, and during the repast many stories were told of lost persons on the desert, on the edge of which stretched the Darnton Ranch.

And Jack decided to know his compass, and the location in the heavens of the sun better in future.

THE SICK BUNNY

(Mother Rabbit to Doctor Owl.)
I'M really scared about my babe;
She hasn't eaten a bite today;
She cries if I but lay her down—
What's the matter with her, pray?

(Doctor Owl to Mother Rabbit.)
"I think the trouble is a cold:
Give her a cup of pepper tea;
And if she isn't better soon
You'd best bring her again to me."

(Mother R. to Dr. O.)
"And how about a mustard draft
Placed on her feet to get them warm;
A little camphor on her brow—
Would either of 'em do her harm?"

(Dr. O. to Mother R.)
"I'd not advise the camphor, ma'm,
I fear 'twould burn her tender skin:
And mustard drafts are too sausage—
On Bunny's feet they'd be a sin!"

(Mother R. to Dr. O.)
"Well, Doctor, I'll take your advice,
And Bunny will get well, I know.
You see, she mustn't stay sick long
For with me calling she must go!"

THE HORSE—HIS HISTORY

IN vain has man endeavored to trace the beginning of the domesticated horse. History does not enlighten us as to when man conquered the beautiful wild creature and made him his beast of burden. To quote a writer on the subject:

"We think of the lonely wastes of America, and remember that the American Red Men, splendid riders, have a type of horse which seems peculiarly their own. Were not the Red Indians the first tamers of the horse in that quiet, lone land of which Caesar never knew? No, they were not, for when Caesar lived, though he had horses, there was not a single horse in America. Horses there had been in America, and elephants, too; but it was millions of years ago, and they had all perished and become fossils long before any date to which we can trace man in America. Horses were reintroduced into America after the discovery of the continent by Columbus, and when the first European horsemen, taken there by Cortez, were seen by the natives, they thought that the riders were some terrible monsters, half horse and half man."

The Arabs have a distinct type of horse, one of the most intelligent, beautiful and faithful of creatures. But if we think that the horse had been tamed and trained at an earlier period in Arabia than elsewhere, we are mistaken, for he had been pressed into use by man long before the Arab had known of him.

We know that in the time of the great Greek historian and traveller, Strabo (who died ten years before Jesus was crucified), there were no horses nor asses in Arabia, or any of its adjoining neighbors. They rode on the camel, and made the docile animal their principal beast of burden. To again quote from an accepted authority on the subject:

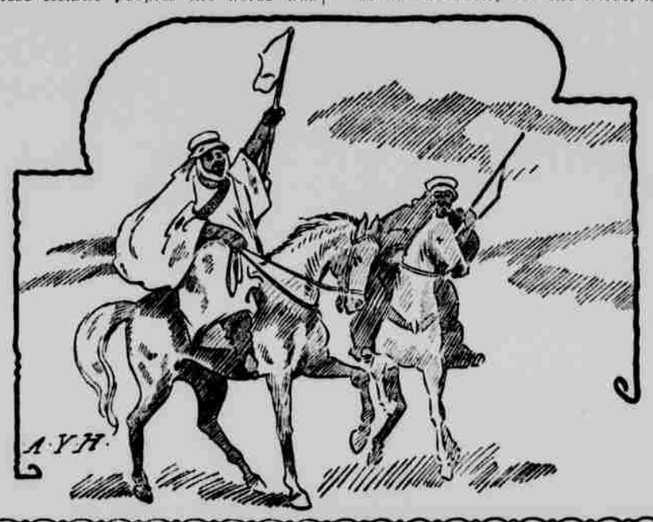
"The naturalist is able to prove fairly and clearly that the lovely Arab horses are descended from the ugly wild horses of Asia, of which droves exist in freedom to this day. We cannot say that these wild horses have always been wild and free. It is likely that there have always been many free, but that their numbers have been swelled from time to time by horses joining them which had once been the property of men. We must seek further, then, for the first tamers of the horse. There is no doubt that among the very first men to tame horses were the Turkomans and the Mongols. From the lands of these Asiatic peoples the horse was taken to India, and through Persia to Assyria, onwards to Egypt and down to Arabia, where the breed reached its crowning glory until the English thoroughbred.

"Can we realize that the four legs and feet of the horse are the counterpart of the human hands and feet? So they are, for millions and millions of years ago the horse—then a very small animal—had fingers and thumbs as we have, but he used them as toes instead. Rather let us say that we converted the toes of our fore limbs into fingers and thumbs, while the horse went on for millions of years using his toes as a means of running. Today he is a four-hoofed animal.

"It was necessary for the horse, in the marshy lands where he lived, to have feet which could expand and keep him from sinking. But Nature was slowly changing the character of the earth and the moist tropical forests gave place to harder, firmer lands, with fewer trees and greater open spaces. The horse's spreading toes, instead of being a help to him, gradually became a hindrance. First the two outer toes became smaller and smaller till they vanished altogether. Then the second and the fourth also disappeared. It was when he had three toes to each fore foot that the horse wandered into England. There were no men in Britain then. The horse came first. England was then joined to Europe, and in its Southern part the horse grew to be quite large.

"Age followed age, and the conditions to which the horse had once been accustomed no more returned. He had, therefore, to continue changing, and he managed in time to drop two more toes, leaving only his middle toe which became enclosed in a tough, horny material which we now call the hoof. It was after the horse had completed this change that he and man became acquainted."

At first, men did not consider the horse in any way save as a source of food. They had no thought of harnessing him and putting him to domestic service. But men at that period were not much smarter than the wild animals about them. They were wild themselves, going about in tribes, fighting other tribes and all wild animals. The horse was the victim of large beasts of prey as well as of man. And it has taken hundreds of thousands of years for man and horse to evolve into the respective species we have today. Just at what period men stopped devouring the horse and made of him a beast of burden, as well as their best animal friend, is not known.



A Gluttonous Fish.

A True "Fish Story."

IN the City of New York there is a very fine aquarium in which a rather expensive boarder lives—one who never pays a cent for his "lodging and grub" except in the way of swimming about to be looked at by the thousands of people who daily pass the huge vat of water in which he lives. This great fish is called a jewfish, and was taken to New York from Key West, Florida, on October 17, 1911. He is five feet in length and weighs 250 pounds. He has a big bulky body and an enormous head which measures fifteen inches across at the base of the jaws. When it opens its big mouth a waterbucket could be inserted into it.

In the way of food this fish eats daily ten pounds of codfish and herring, the latter being fed to it whole and the former cut into pound-and-a-half strips. This amount of food counts up pretty big at the end of the month, and costs quite a sum of money. This fish could easily swallow whole a codfish weighing four or five pounds, but its keepers do not think that such a show of gluttony should be permitted, so they cut its food into smaller bites.

Of all the dwellers in the aquarium there is but one fish that eats more than the jewfish just described; he is the sea lion, and he consumes twenty pounds of food daily. But he is eight feet long and weighs 600 pounds.

JOHNNY AND MAGGIE RIDE TO FAIRYLAND

A Story For Wee Ones.

JOHNNY had a brand new rocking horse. Grandpa had brought it on Johnny's seventh birthday. And Johnny was very, very proud of it, to be sure. And he did not mind his little sister Maggie riding on the rocking horse, whose name was Spring-time Pete. You see, the rocking horse got such a funny name in this way: Grandmamma had told Johnny and Maggie the funniest story of an old stray horse who had come to her father's home when she was a little girl. This happened in the early spring, and Grandmamma's father, always doing jolly things, had laughed and said: "The old stray looks like our old negro hostler, so we'll name him for old Pete. And since he has come in the spring time, we'll call him Spring-time Pete." So the old horse had lived out the remainder of his life on the great plantation belonging to Grandmamma's father, for no one had ever called for him, and no one ever answered the advertisements Grandmamma's father had inserted in the county papers. So "Spring-time Pete" had become a sort of family name for stray animals, cats, dogs, and occasionally a horse. And as there had been no Spring-time Pete in the family since Johnny and Maggie had entered it, Johnny thought it a good plan to call his new rocking horse Spring-time Pete.

And as I began to tell you a bit ago, Johnny did not mind his little sister Maggie's riding Spring-time Pete—when he, Johnny, was not himself on his back. But one day Maggie begged to ride when Johnny was riding, and Johnny, being a bit selfish (as, I regret to say most little boys are on first owning a rocking horse!) decided to allow Maggie to ride behind him. "Spring-time Pete is very strong, and will carry double," Johnny said. "He's a very gentle horse, and good natured. So get up behind me, Sister, and we'll ride together."

"Now, where shall we ride to, Sister?" Johnny asked as soon as Maggie was safely settled behind him, holding round his manly waist with her two chubby arms.

"Oh, let's go to Fairyland!" It was a happy inspiration, and Maggie glowed with pleasure as she made the suggestion. She had heard so much about Fairyland, and had longed and longed to go there. And it never entered her five-year-old head to doubt the possibility of Spring-time Pete's carrying them to Fairyland.

"But," faltered Johnny, "we don't know the direction to go. We haven't the slightest idea where Fairyland is."

"Well, doesn't Spring-time Pete know where it is?" asked Maggie, in good faith. "He's a horse, and ought to know where to gallop to find any ole place. Just you say, 'Get up, Spring-time Pete, and take us to Fairyland before supper time.' And I'm quite sure he'll do it."

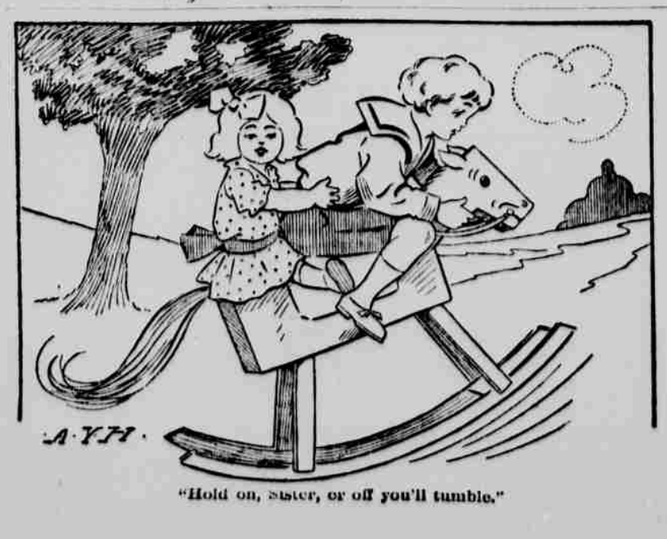
"Maybe he will," agreed Johnny. And giving Spring-time Pete the reins, he called out into his brown-painted ear: "Get up, Spring-time Pete! And carry us to Fairyland before supper time."

Then Spring-time Pete began to gallop very fast, and to toss his head and to swing his long tail. And pretty soon he jumped off the back porch, where he had been hitched previous to the children's mounting him, and went out through the back gate, running like a real, sure-enough horse towards the river a mile off.

"Hold on, Sister, or off you'll tumble!" It was Johnny's warning to Maggie, for Spring-time Pete was going at an awful speed, and his burden rocked from side to side. Johnny held tightly to the horn of the saddle, leaving the reins lie across it.

"I shan't tumble off, Bruver," replied Maggie, holding more tightly as they went rushing down a steep hill and up the other side. It was very good fun, running down a hill and up the other side just as fast as Spring-time Pete could go!

"We're off to Fairyland, I guess," said Johnny several minutes later.



"Hold on, Sister, or off you'll tumble."

"Yes, and we'll get there before supper time, too," replied Maggie, ducking her head so as to keep the dust out of her eyes.

After going for some distance, Spring-time Pete turned into a path leading from the road. This path ran across a meadow, up and down a hill and over a bridge which spanned a creek. And then it led right into Grandmother Gregg's (the children's father's mother) big front yard.

"W'y, we're going to Granny's!" cried Maggie, peeping past one side Johnny's broad back. "Isn't this Granny's path?"

"Yep, it's Granny's path," said Johnny. "Maybe Fairyland is in the woods back of Granny's. Anyway, we're going some place very fast."

But Spring-time Pete did not stop inside Grandmamma Gregg's big front yard. He just galloped right through and out at the back gate, not stopping long enough for the children to explain to their "Granny," who stood in the door and waved a hand to them as they went by, where they were off to. But Granny must have known, she called out to them: "Take the left-hand path after you enter the timber. And ride straight ahead!"

Spring-time Pete did take the right-hand path and saved Johnny the trouble of letting go of the saddle horn to guide him with the reins. On and on they rode, past little waterfalls, over mossy banks, up a steep hillside, all shady with trees. Then they suddenly entered through a rose-covered gate, and lo! they were in Fairyland. Three fairies rushed to welcome them, one to hold the horse's rein, one to assist Maggie to alight and one to give Johnny a hand as he sprang from the saddle.

The three fairies were almost like Johnny and Maggie, only they had wings and never had to ride horses to get over long distances. They could cover a lot of ground in a few seconds. They were dear little creatures, and spoke the same language that Johnny and Maggie spoke. In fact, the fairies could speak any tongue.

"We were expecting you, my dears," said the Queen Fairy, coming forward. This surprised Johnny and Maggie very much, for they had not sent any word to the fairies that they were coming. But they supposed that fairies knew all things, which of course they did.

"Now, come right into my castle," said the smiling queen, and she led them into the loveliest rose-hung bower the children had ever seen, Grandmamma's flower-covered summer-house not excepted. Inside the castle, the queen clapped her tiny hands and grasshoppers came hopping in, carrying tiny golden trays on which were various fairy dishes. Preserved rose buds, honeyed wild strawberries and gooseberries, wild honeysuckle in morning dew and many other delicacies the fairies are noted for. Johnny and Maggie ate with relish, and declared they had never tasted such delicious food before.

But Spring-time Pete was making a great noise at the gate, stamping his hoofs and neighing loudly. Johnny ran to see what ailed him, and found him tossing his head impatiently, as though getting ready to start for home.

"He wants to return to his own abode," said one of the three fairies who had come running out to meet the visitors. "He is afraid he cannot reach home before nightfall unless you come at once and mount to your places on his back. He is a noble and trusty animal, and I congratulate you on being the happy owner of him."

"Yes, he is a fine beast," acquiesced Johnny, talking very much as his father talked. "He is sure a fine horse. He hasn't a fault. But I'll go call my sister."

"Nay, take your ease," replied the fairy. "I'll run and call the lady." And away she flew to the castle and told Maggie that her steed was at the gate in readiness for her to depart. On hearing this, the queen arose and escorted Maggie to the door. And as that little lady departed, the queen waved her wand above her head, saying:

"Little Human Lady, fine,
Come again some day:
Come in early morning hours,
And with us all day stay.
We will take you everywhere
In our dear Fairyland;
And you'll see a noble place
Kept by Fairy Band."

Maggie waved a loving farewell, kissed both hands to the queen and took her leave, escorted by two fairies. They carried flowers and candied and honeyed fruits in little baskets for Johnny and Maggie, which they fastened on to Spring-time Pete's saddle at the sides, just above where Johnny's stirrups were.

Then saying many farewells, the children mounted Spring-time Pete and he set off towards home, going even faster than when coming forth. He was hungry, Johnny said, for a horse would always travel faster going home than when going away from home. He knew a manger of hay and a basket of oats were in waiting for him. So Johnny told Maggie, and Maggie believed him, for Johnny was an honest boy and never told anything that was not strictly true.

They reached home just before Papa came for supper, and took up their place on the porch, just where they had been before going to Fairyland. And when mamma came out to call them into supper she said: "Well, you have enjoyed old Spring-time Pete all afternoon, haven't you, my dearies? You haven't left the porch once."

"Oh, yes, Mamma, we went to Fairyland," cried Johnny, getting out of the saddle, and running into the house to supper. "Yes, Mamma," declared Maggie, also leaping down from Spring-time Pete's back, "we went to Fairyland. And the queen, she invited us into her castle and gave us fairy food to eat."

And Mamma only laughed at her little ones' story, for she knew they had only played at going to Fairyland, for she had sat by the open window and listened to their childish play all afternoon, and knew they had not once left the porch, but had "made-believe" to go to Fairyland, and to have passed right through Grandmamma's big yard. And Mamma told Papa all about it, and Papa said "Well, can my little ones eat common food after dining with a Fairy Queen?"

And Johnny took up a big bowl of sweet milk and rice and began to eat with relish. "Yes, Papa, we like plain human grub," he said.

"Yes, Papa, we like hain puman grub," said Maggie, her mouth so full of something good that she got her words all mixed up. "But we like fairy things to eat too. Don't we Bruver?"

And all "Bruver" could do was nod his head.

Puzzle Corner

LETTER ENIGMA.

My first is in glow, but not in shine;
My second is in salt, but not in brine:
My third is in rail, but not in fence:
My fourth is in dollar, but not in pence:
My fifth is in lean, but not in fat;
My sixth is in bonnet, but not in hat:
My seventh is in busy, but not in bee:
My eighth is the same as my fifth, you see:
My ninth is the same as my fifth, also:
My tenth is the same as my fourth, you know.

My whole is something
We plant in the spring;
And food for all people
The planting will bring.

CHARADE.

My first's a color, bright and clear;
'Tis worn by women and by girls:
And from the flag-poles everywhere
'Midst other colors it unfurls.

My second is a term of slang
Applied to greenhorn and to lout;
And if bad boys do see them round
This name at them they'll rudely shout.

My two do make a well-known bird—
A bird we love in bush and tree.
If you can't solve this simple rhyme,
Then do not dare to question me.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

BEHEADINGS AND CURTAILINGS: 1. *Steam-tea.* 2. *Spine-pin.* 3. *Prices-rice.* 4. *Flies-lie.* 5. *Modes-ode.*

ZIGZAG PUZZLE: *Tropics. Cross words*, 1. *Tale.* 2. *Prop.* 3. *Spot.* 4. *Trap.* 5. *Plain.* 6. *Ices.* 7. *Sham.*

NUMERICAL ENIGMA: *Menagerie. Words spelt from its letters, Green, Name, Grime, Game, Men, Marie, Rain.*

PICTURE PUZZLE: *The cord to the monkey's collar.*